

Lilac (Ash) Borer

Pupal skins extrude from trunk

Name and Description—*Podosesia syringae* (Harris) [Lepidoptera: Sesiidae]

Adult lilac (ash) borers are moths that vary in color from brown to yellow to orange. They have clear wings with a span of about 1-1 1/8 inches (26-28 mm) and appear wasp-like (fig. 1). Larvae are about 1 inch (2.5 cm) long and are white with brown heads (fig. 2).

Hosts—Ash and lilac

Life Cycle—There is one generation per year. Mature borer larvae overwinter in tunnels under the bark. Adult moths emerge from March through June to lay eggs on the bark of host trees. The larvae bore into trunks and branches of the sapwood of trees during the summer. Galleries can be up to 6 inches (15 cm) long.

Damage—The mining of the larvae causes branch dieback (fig. 3). It can also lead to broken branches. The leaves on affected branches turn brown as the branch dies. Extensive mining can also lead to tree death. Entrances to larval mines often appear as sunken or cankered areas on the bark of the trunk or branch. Dark, moist sawdust can be found around the gallery entrance (fig. 4). Pupal skin remaining in the bark is often also observed (fig. 5).

Management—Avoid damaging trees—maintaining trees in good health reduces their susceptibility to attack. There are chemical sprays that are highly effective at preventing attacks, but they must be used at the onset of moth flight. Trees and branches that have been attacked can be removed and destroyed to kill maturing larvae.



Figure 1. Adult ash borer. Photo: Daniel Hermis, Ohio State University, Bugwood.org.



Figure 2. Ash borer larva. Photo: James Solomon, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org.



Figure 3. Ash borer damage. Photo: James Solomon, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org.



Figure 4. Ash borer gallery entrance. Photo: James Solomon, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org.



Figure 5. Pupal skin pulled out from trunk during adult emergence. Photo: Whitney Cranshaw, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org.

1. Dix, M.E.; Pasek, J.E.; Harrell, M.O.; Baxendale, F.P. 1986. Common insect pests of trees in the Great Plains. EC 86-1548. Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service. 44 p.
2. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. 1985. Insects of eastern forests. Misc. Publ. 1426. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. 608 p.